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and where is the body?

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Graduate Program in Visual Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Fine Arts

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Abstract

In combination with a Master of Fine Arts thesis exhibition, *and where is the body?*, this dossier offers the following as accompanying components: an extended artist statement, a transcribed interview with artist Francisco-Fernando Granados, documented artwork and a curriculum vitae. The section containing documented artwork provides a selected overview of my creative research and material exploration made during my time at Western University. These components complement my creative research and expand on the ideas of queer identity, performance, vulnerability, assemblage and drag that are explored in my thesis exhibition.

Keywords

abject, art, assemblage, drag, hair, LGBTQ, queer identity, performance, Francisco-Fernando Granados, Renate Lorenz, Sara Ahmed, sculpture, the formless, vulnerability.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Keywords.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Comprehensive Artist Statement	2
Queer Postiche	2
Disorientation, Assemblage and Queer Juxtapositions	6
What is Exposed? Audience, Vulnerability and Abjection	9
Beginning to End	11
Artists of Influence	12
Conclusion	14
Works Cited.....	15
Supplemental Reading List.....	16
Chapter 2: Interview with Artist Francisco-Fernando Granados.....	19
Interview Bibliography.....	31
Chapter 3: Creative Research Documentation	32
Curriculum Vitae	48

Introduction

This dossier contains three chapters which accompany the exhibition, *and where is the body?*, taking place at Western University's ArtLab Gallery from June seventh to twentieth, 2018. The three chapters include a comprehensive artist statement, a transcribed interview with artist Francisco-Fernando Granados, and documentation of a selection of artwork made throughout the duration of my MFA candidacy.

Chapter one is divided into six subsections. "Queer Postiche" outlines my material practice, sourcing hair as a material for my work, and how ideas of drag as outlined by Renate Lorenz inform my conceptual framework. "Disorientation, Assemblage and Queer Juxtapositions" centres assemblage and juxtaposition within my practice, how the notion of disorientation and disorganization as outlined by Sara Ahmed influences my work, and briefly speaks to the importance of queerness and bisexuality. "What is Exposed? Audience, Vulnerability and Abjection" positions vulnerability within my work in relation to the audience, the artist and abjection. "Beginning to End" speaks to how my work has evolved from my first months at Western and retained important themes. "Artist Influences" touches on those contemporary artists who have informed my practice and, finally, "Conclusion" addresses the title and layout of *and where is the body?*

Chapter two consists of a transcribed interview with artist Francisco-Fernando Granados, which supports and complements my artistic statement. Prior to the interview, I performed an iteration of Granados' *spatial profiling*... alongside artists Angie Quick and Taylor Doyle at SATELLiTE Project Space in downtown London, Ontario. Because of its focus on identity politics, queerness and the role of the audience, as well as the proximity of the performance residue during the interview (which was conducted in the gallery where the piece was performed), conversation around *spatial profiling*... constitutes a large and productive part of the interview.

Chapter three is a selection of photographs of my creative research, made during my MFA candidacy. Photographs of the works are accompanied by a brief statement about the pieces to provide context. The dossier concludes with my curriculum vitae.

Chapter 1: Comprehensive Artist Statement

Queer Postiche

My practice is rooted in my identity as a cisgender, bisexual man with a fluid gender expression. My work revolves around queer identity and performance; I am interested in how identities are performed and maintained, the relationship of identity and the body, and how room for non-normative identities can be made. To explore these ideas, I create sculptural works that are sometimes activated through performance for an audience, explored through video investigation, or presented with traces of a performance existing in the work. The materials I have used in my creative research include silicone and hair (synthetic and genuine human/animal), alginate and plaster, lace, and sometimes found materials.

I see a relationship between identity and the body, and I connect them through ideas of labour and self-care. Labour and care are embedded in the making of each of my objects. Each piece that requires hair to be poked or knotted into a material surface takes focus and extended periods of time because each strand can only be applied one or two at a time. This slow work is crucial because it defines the varying hair patterns, hair densities and shapes I create. Often, another wave of labour is expended in the gallery when the work is performed for an audience. Labour is an inextricable part of my work and I see it referencing the time it takes to maintain an identity. Sometimes self-care can be thought of as passive, like rest and relaxation, but I see this connection in my work as a very active one. Doing the labour is just as much a part of the work as the final product. In this sense, the making of the sculpture is a kind of performance that the audience rarely gets to see. This mirrors the way in which a lot of the labour we do in creating or maintaining an identity is not seen or goes unnoticed: The styling, trimming and removing of hair, adjusting one's voice pitch, checking of posture and more.

As a material, hair grants me access to a conversation about the body, identity and to the maintenance of both. It is a loaded visual signifier linked to ideas surrounding beauty, health, class, gender, race and spirituality, to name a few associations. How we show care with respect to those signifiers influences how we are identified. Conversely, when we choose not to care for those things, we relinquish some control on those

signifiers, and expose ourselves to a different reading. In an interview about the exhibition “Hair! Human Hair in Fashion and Art,” which ran from February 20 until May 29, 2016, at Centraal Museum in Utrecht, Holland, curator Ninke Bloenburg related similar feelings on the relationship between the two things, in an interview for *Disegno*: “Hair is very important for one’s identity: it is in your face, it is who you are and it communicates what kind of mood you are in. It is very personal and differs between cultures as well.”¹

The deeply personal and yet global relationships people have to hair are among those that I want to access. I do this by using hair as a conceptual entry point to access the idea of identity and how it is performed. While doing this I remind myself that while identity and the body are linked, our bodies do not necessarily equate the totality of our identities. For many, bodies are only part of what constitutes identity. Our actions, beliefs and values, upbringing and more, factor into the equation, too. As we experience new things, and as our values and bodies change, we shift as people. We learn to perform our identity in accordance to those beliefs and shifts.

The majority of my work is created by casting objects in silicone and inserting hairs individually into the rubber forms, in a way that can resemble a natural growth pattern. The length, colour and type of hair sample I use in the silicone body is considered: each sample helps direct the nuances of the piece and the quality of the hair dictates how it can be used. For example, long and straight hair has proven to be versatile for my purposes: it can be cut or used at full length and it responds well to brushing. After the piece is finished, it can help promote a sleek appearance and the ideas of self-care that I’m interested in exploring because the hair appears groomed or maintained.

Hair is a key component of the transformative nature inherent to drag: in wigs, prosthetics and accessories, this material plays a major part in convincing others that you are someone other than who you normally present yourself to be. In line with Lorenz’s thoughts on drag, its elements and props make possible the rethinking and reworking of knowledge about the desires and emotions we have about our bodies. This rethinking and

¹Anya Lawrence, ‘Hair! Human Hair in Fashion and Art,’ *Disegno Daily: The Quarterly Journal of Design* (February 2016): 1, <https://www.disegnodaily.com/article/hair-human-hair-in-fashion-and-art>.

reworking allows for alternative histories to be manifest, because “drag means retracing processes of construction of one’s own body.”²

Of concern for many artists, myself included, is the source of their materials. When learning about wig making, I found that the source of the hair used is almost always presented up front: “made with genuine human hair,” or “100% virgin hair,” or similar phrases are common. Indication of where the hair originated and how it was sourced is often less clear because of a troubling lack of ethics that is regularly in evidence. Despite this lack of ethics, in 2017 hair and aesthetics salons saw revenues of five billion dollars in Canada, and that amount is predicted to rise with inflation and the demand for products.³ The Guardian in 2012 that reported how human hair had been taken by force or through deception by agents who travel to eastern parts of the world to bring the product back to westerners. It also outlined how much of the hair from China, India, and eastern Europe often comes from poverty-stricken women who sell their hair for very little money, or are forced to give up their hair by family members or aggressors.⁴ And although these unfortunate circumstances are not always the conditions under which hair is brought to the West to be sold (the Guardian article mentions companies who are much more ethically sound) and while artists, wig makers and fetishists can buy from those who say their products are cruelty-free, sadly these claims can never be fully guaranteed. To navigate this uneasy terrain, as an artist I choose to only source and use hair that has been personally donated to me in a one-to-one exchange, or to use synthetic hair, and also to use animal hair that has been collected by myself or trusted others in a cruelty-free way.

When thinking about identity and the question of how to present a body without also presenting an individual, I find resonance in the writing of Renate Lorenz in *Queer Art: A Freak Theory*, specifically her writing on drag and denormalizing practices. In the introductory chapter the question arises: how can art manage to successfully present issues of the body, gender, identity and sexuality without explicitly providing a body for

² Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 22.

³ “Hair and Nail Salons Report: Market Research in Canada,” accessed January 3, 2018, <https://www.ibisworld.ca/industry-trends/market-research-reports/other-services-except-public-administration/hair-nail-salons.html>.

⁴ Homa Khaleeli. “The Hair Trade’s Dirty Secret,” *The Guardian*, 28 October 2012, sec. Women, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/oct/28/hair-extension-global-trade-secrets>.

the audience to examine and identify with or against? “How can a body be ‘there’ if distance from the body is simultaneously suggested?”⁵ The answer for Lorenz, and myself, is drag, which extends past colloquial definitions, past the mere transformation of woman into man or man into woman through the application of makeup, clothing, props and wigs. In the context of queer art theory, the representation of a thing, an identity or person is not of the utmost importance for this drag. What is important is creating links between disparate ideas through the use of assemblage: “connections of natural and artificial, animate and inanimate, to clothes, radios, hair, legs... .”⁶ The results of this provide alternatives to and distance from hegemonic societal norms (of passing, white, able, identifiable as a specific gender, efficient, etc), while also withholding new true/false, good/bad dichotomies regarding sexuality, the body, gender and identity. This drag denormalizes through presenting others, and alternatives. Curiously, as Lorenz proposes it, drag is both doing and undoing simultaneously.⁷ In *Untitled (Plug)*, the making and activation of the sculpture participate in this idea. To make the work, I filled my mouth to capacity with dentist-grade alginate to create a positive cast. Using this, I made the finished sculpture, which is a similarly sized positive. The finished sculpture is activated by inserting it into my mouth and leaving it there while reciting a monologue from memory. Both the alginate precursor and final work render me unintelligible as a speaker and susceptible to choking. The work allows me to present myself as not adhering to the rules of hegemonic system, connecting the idea of “man” with vulnerability, uncertainty and powerlessness, which are normally at odds with each other. In this way the doing (inserting the positive into my mouth) is a temporary undoing of the idea of a man. The inactive *Plug* also speaks to Lorenz’s idea of simultaneously doing and undoing through assemblage: the sculpture connects hair and the tongue, the performance of a monologue and the idea of unintelligibility or unproductivity. In doing this, these pairings present alternates to how a “normal” body is organized and functions.

Lorenz identifies three modes of drag which achieve the aforementioned doing and undoing, and I see my work considering the first and last, though each mode is elastic such that one’s art practice could fit in all three. “Radical Drag” acknowledges the

⁵ Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 21.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

dichotomous systems (male-female, able/non-able and more) but disrupts them by offering objects, people or situations that are not measurable or understandable within that system. These could be commonplace objects or people that are framed in an unreadable way, or a variety of other options. In this way the system being used is not legitimated or endorsed, but countered. “Transtemporal Drag” offers up objects, situations, people and concepts that can play with and within the structures and laws that govern heteronormative life. They draw attention to the status quo and then offer an alternative temporal space in which those structures and laws are subverted, thus threatening or changing in the way they advance. With the third mode, “Abstract Drag,” no body is explicitly on display in the artwork, but it is instead referred to via objects, situations, or traces of performance.⁸

Here I accept that my work may be uncategorizable as male/female, able/unable, or even comparable to any body the audience may know, but because of this the viewer must spend time thinking through possibilities for the artwork’s agency. For Lorenz this “is a practice that seeks out the possibilities of ‘becoming’ within these experiences of inequality and hierarchies. It produces ‘others’ without the predetermined hierarchy which responds ‘other than what?’”⁹

Disorientation, Assemblage and Queer Juxtapositions

At the heart of my material exploration is the idea of juxtaposition and assemblage. I see these as being powerful tools to explore how identity is performed and as a way to provide alternative identities to what is considered acceptable according to predominant heteronormative standards. This is because of the denotation Sara Ahmed puts forward in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*: that disorientation of people and objects is akin to disorganization.¹⁰ Acknowledging the systematic and socially constructed order of things in the Western world, Ahmed explains that when the predominant relationships to things, people or objects change (such that one moment does not follow another as a sequence of spatial and/or temporal givens), it can be unsettling,

⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰ “Disorientation can be a bodily feeling of losing one’s place, and an effect of the loss of place...Furthermore, as I showed in chapter 3, an effect of being ‘out of place’ is also to create disorientation in others: the body of color might disturb the picture—and do so simply as a result of being in spaces that are lived as white, spaces into which white bodies can sink.” Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 160.

but ultimately advantageous because it creates room for perspectives and realities outside the status quo to exist.¹¹ One clear example of this is in her reference to Martin Heidegger and the table: “In other words, what we do with the table, or what the table allows us to do, is essential to the table. So we do things 'on the table,' which is what makes the table what it is and take shape in the way that it does. *The table is assembled around the support it gives.*”¹² That is to say, the table is not just wood and screws. It exists as a table because its interaction with everything surrounding it. This assemblage of things makes the table what it is and when it is changed or disrupted the table is viewed in a new way. Such a perspective is powerful because it fights against restrictive and exclusive systems by offering perspectives, spaces and realities that are other.

The idea of hair being out of place (on the body, floating unwanted in your soup, or otherwise) intrigues me and repeats in my work because of its ties to Ahmed’s notion of disorientation. Hair can help to firmly place us within the hegemonic systems that dominate (when it is found in a place society at large deems as normal), and it can also help to throw us well outside of those systems when it does not align with its laws. In this light, there is a relation between hair and others. A paradigmatic example of this is the image and legacy of Annie Jones (1865-1902). Jones is renowned for being a Barnum Circus figure and a bearded lady, and her image is tied to a history of segregation and othering. In this context, hair creates a connection to a history of identity that is in some ways distinctly queer. Another example of this that I found more personally relatable stems from an episode of *Nancy*, a podcast dedicated to telling “stories and conversations about queer experiences today.”¹³ During episode seven, co-host and managing editor Kathy Tu speaks with Radio Producer Rachel Matlow about the topic of hair and appearance as it influences queer identity and coming out. For Matlow, being openly queer in the world and her hair are intertwined. She relates a story about cutting her hair shortly after she came out and how that haircut felt like part of the coming out process: it was about “feeling more openly queer in the world and allowing signifiers to shine, whereas I ‘pass’ [for straight] with long hair.”¹⁴ I suspect that the idea of hair (or even

¹¹ Ibid., 158.

¹² Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology,” *GLQ: Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 551, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832>.

¹³ “Fear of Being Butch,” Danie Drankwaller, interview by Kathy Tu, *Nancy*, WNYC Studios, podcast audio, May 14, 2017, <https://www.wnycstudios.org/shows/nancy/3>

¹⁴ Ibid.

more generally, appearance) and identity being intertwined is not isolated to just Matlow but accepted within the broader queer community too, and perhaps beyond. I play with this connection in my work, hoping to access one through the other.

I assemble and juxtapose cast body parts and objects together, merging them to access the ideas of alternative identities conceptually. The sources of the objects I use in my sculptures are varied. Many of them are found at hardware stores, antique shops, loaned from friends or encountered at home. I take pleasure in the unsystematic way in which the objects are sourced, and find that consequentially there is a link to the idea of queer intuition (which will be expanded on in Chapter 2). Briefly though, because the objects are often found while I'm not actively looking for them (they seem to present themselves to me as appropriate for the project), I find a certain non-productive pleasure shining through in this experience that is distinctly queer. Not all of the objects that I find are used in sculptures, but those that are used often feel appropriate because of their visual likeness to body parts: tangled plumbers tubing becomes something resembling innards or a tail, a specialty lunch container helps create something kindred to male genitals or a swollen finger, a silicone funnel mimes a mouth, and so on. For example *Untitled (Tail I)* is the product of merging an automotive funnel with the end of a length of plumber's tubing, and flooding their combined interiors with water-clear silicone. The cured silicone body is partially embedded with hair near the exterior of the lower section of the form. When hung vertically from the wall using a painted test tube holder, which itself mimics tiny hands, or a tiny mouth, but is at once clearly machined and non-human, the work alludes to a paint brush, a broom, a sex toy of sorts, an abbreviated digestive system, a tail and more. It is many things and nothing specific all at once. Without the test tube holder, the piece falls limp and flacid because of the flexibility of the rubber, undoing its rigid form. Evoking many objects and forms, restlessly referencing but never settling on fully distinguishable or categorizable things brings the work into the realm of the formless. As Rina Arya relays in *Abjection and Representation* by referencing the writing of Georges Bataille, the formless is not a thing but rather an adjective or action, which is present when the formal properties of a thing are broken down.¹⁵ Its evasiveness and refusal to settle makes it an antithesis to order, to binary, to structure. This shifting

¹⁵ Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 121-22.

and constant transforming nature is advantageous to think about when talking about performing identity. To create something which is made of many things, which is unperceivable as a discrete thing, which fluctuates between the familiar and unfamiliar, is to evoke the shifting qualities of the formless, and helps to make room for the creation of alternative identities which do not reside within a binary structure.

It is improbable to expect the audience to understand my exhibition to be explicitly about bisexuality, but as the maker I see my work having that connection. Though it could be argued that every artwork I make is in some way touching on my lived experience of being bisexual, the characteristics of the formless echo my experiences. I am almost always labelled by others as gay, straight, or unidentifiably queer because of the way I present myself or the company I keep: those signifiers which others read me through. This unintentional shifting of identity as perceived by others speaks to the attributes of the formless.

What is Exposed? Audience, Vulnerability and Abjection

The conveyance of vulnerability is an important factor in my work because of its inextricable ties to my life as a queer person, as it is for a large portion of the LGBTQ+ population. Speaking through the words of Vincent F. Sacco and William Glackman, Ahmed describes vulnerability “in terms of ‘feelings of susceptibility and openness to attack’.”¹⁶ If being invulnerable is to be impervious to harm, being vulnerable is to be exposed to imperfection, criticism and the unfamiliar, sometimes willingly so. In thinking of how living out is often to be vulnerable to judgement, my performative work sometimes uses vulnerability by revealing someone who is exposed, who finds themselves in a strange and unfamiliar situation. For example in *Hackles*, a performance for the camera, a necklace I made prior to the video by knotting three-foot long strands of hair into links of a chain is slowly destroyed through brushing. Wearing only the necklace, I brushed the hair against my naked torso in an attempt to comb through the tangles. However, the jewellery was unsalvageable: the hair became matted and was roughly pulled from the chain by the brush. The performance ended when the necklace fell in a pile on the floor, revealing my broken, redened skin as a result of the act. My other

¹⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 68-69.

sculptural objects, which are not activated by me for an audience, negotiate vulnerability in a more nuanced way. When building *Reading the Room*, I repurposed the gallery hygromograph to slowly spin a hairy canister inside its plexiglass case instead of the traditional graph paper. Doing so stripped its original function of measuring the temperature and humidity in the room, but as the hair spins it reveals pre-existing cracks in the plexiglass case. Hair slides across the inside, pokes out of the rupture and gets pulled back in. While it moves across the plastic, its static charge grows, causing the hair to stand on end. In both these instances, I see my broken skin, the ruined hair necklace, the cracked plexiglass and a build-up of static act as imperfections and manifestations of vulnerability. If the sculptural objects I created and the performances I enact highlight discomfort, imperfection and the unfamiliar, then they are creating a relationship with the idea of vulnerability. For example, when considering my performative sculpture *Untitled (Plug)*—an oversized cast of my mouth, which acts as a hairy plug and inhibitor to communication—I am vulnerable to choking, discomfort, and misunderstanding of my utterances. Here, the societal cues that form what it means to be conventionally masculine are called into question. As a speaker, I am now exposed to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. My eyes water as the plug pushes on the back of my throat. My face is suddenly red with embarrassment and wet with drool. I show signs of stress and emotion. So, an alternative way to view masculinity is created through making vulnerable, and undermining the societal expectations that are built around what it means to be masculine.¹⁷

To date I have only performed within a gallery or educational institution, which are safe spaces to explore ideas surrounding identity, the body, queerness, and vulnerability. The gallery helps provide distance from the vulnerability which occurs in everyday situations. It does this by granting me more control than I would normally have: I decide when the performances start and stop, and when and how to involve the audience. However, anxiety and vulnerability are still present within me and my work. This is something that I see as connected to the lingering vulnerability of performing queerness in daily life. This may change and diminish over time, but I see vulnerability as

¹⁷ Ulf Mellstrom, "From a Hegemonic Politics of Masculinity to an Ontological Politics of Intimacy and Vulnerability? Ways of Imagining through Karen Barad's Work," *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, no. 30 (2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.20415/rhiz/030.e07>.

crucial to my current work. Similarly, I think of the control I exert when making or performing as speaking to the overarching prevalence with which queer people manage their bodily signifiers, to influence how other people identify them. I prefer to work in an exacting and controlled way whenever possible. This is apparent when looking at the precise insertion of hairs into lace and silicone forms. However, control must be relinquished sometimes, and for me this usually happens when there is no other option: during performances when materials do not react as I want them to, and when the final outcome is not what I anticipated. It also occurs as I cast silicone objects, when the moulds are weak and do not hold rubber, produce silicone bodies in unexpected ways.

Many of my works contain an abject quality: their nature can concurrently evoke strong feelings of familiarity and disgust; they often invite touch and yet are strange enough to encourage a certain distancing. Though I am not necessarily trying to create this feeling, it is a welcomed incidental effect that I embrace because of how it exposes the audience to vulnerability. The idea that abjection is an action or an operation that breaks the metaphorical safe space around the audience intrigues me, and something I like to focus on when it occurs.¹⁸ Also regarding the audience, the dynamic of live performance is quite unique when it comes to vulnerability and exposure because viewers are involved in a more direct way, one that may be beyond their control.¹⁹ As an audience member agreeing to enter the gallery to watch a live work, one gives up control of the situation to the artist or performer. That relinquishing of control is an acceptance of exposure to whatever might happen. This temporary embrace of exposure speaks to a queer experience because it touches on the vulnerability of living outside of the hegemonic system.

Beginning to End

Arriving at Western in 2016, my interest in the performance of identity seemed at odds with the media I was using: oil and acrylic paint. I soon realized that starting a conversation about identity was best done with sculpture and performance because both of those media present the idea of vulnerability in a more embodied way than my

¹⁸ Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 125.

¹⁹ Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 17.

paintings had done. After this realization, my first sculptural experimentations did not include hair, but focused on a theme that would lead me to my current work. I began investigating the idea of male spaces (man-caves) and how the objects within them either further or diminish the heteronormative male identity of their owner. As a queer artist who has often had his identity called into question by the straight community, and increasingly by queer communities, my interests piqued when thinking about the decoy or facade object: one which seemed to help solidify a stereotypical masculine identity around the owner, but in fact fails to do so. The sculptures resulting from this exploration were deliberately less adequate at fulfilling the tasks their genuine counterparts were designed to do. Some of the sculptures were tools, paint brushes and even a haphazard stool, hammered out from frail aluminium sheet metal and painted to look substantial from a distance. I painted a faux wood veneer on a stretch of eighteen-foot long canvas, which acted as a prop wall for the man-cave. Using salvaged wooden off-cuts, I constructed taxidermy mallard duck heads mounted on MDF to resemble hunting trophies, and hung these on the wall along with other decoy items I crafted and collected. The result was an imaginary man-cave made real from assembled and juxtaposed parts. When viewed from a distance it acted as a semi-persuasive heteronormative male space, but closer inspection revealed the objects to be decoys, which failed to uphold the tropes of stereotypical heteronormative masculinity. In hindsight, I see the beginnings of my interest in vulnerability creeping into my work here: viewers see the objects as vulnerable to being exposed as decoys. Just as my newer work shows vulnerability through imperfection, so did this work. Also, this work laid the foundation for my eventual steps into performance: even though I had not intended to build a performance space, what I had created was a set, complete with a backdrop and props. This piece served as a jumping off point from my previous artistic practice and directed me towards researching artists who would influence my current practice.

Artists of Influence

Roula Partheniou's sculptural works have a relationship with the idea of the decoy, for example, *Caution Yellow* (2009) and *Chalk to Cheese* (2016) play with the audience's

perception of what is real, and ask the audience to navigate the new terrain they present.²⁰ In *Caution Yellow*, this terrain is a literal one: the audience must decide whether the carefully crafted banana peel is genuine or an artwork, and carefully navigate the space around it. *Chalk to Cheese* presents a conceptual landscape, where the audience must locate the connections between the sculptures on the table, finding visual connections between fake Pepto-Bismol bottles, pink erasers, Post-It pads and sponges.

When my material research began to include silicone and hair, formal and conceptual linkages between my work and artists like Evan Penny and Matthew Barney took shape. Penny's work also utilizes silicone, often pigmented, embedded with hair in a way that speaks to the experience of the body but also references classical sculpture and photography in a hyperreal way. In an interview with *Canadian Art*, Penny frames how the audience experiences his sculptures in a visceral way first, before having an intellectual response that digests that reaction.²¹ I hope my work provides a similar reaction, pointing to the abject and the accompanying vulnerability. Robert Gober's sculptures of sinks in different levels of completeness and functionality, cat litter bags, distorted cribs, fake newspapers, human body parts and more are all meticulously made by hand and can appear to be readymade art objects at first glance.²² I find a certain queer kinship with his work because of how he strives to make his pieces look perfectly genuine using inauthentic materials. This combined with the strange juxtapositions of these pieces, for example in *Leg with Anchor* (2008), and the ways they are installed feels like he was deliberately taking cues from Ahmed.²³ Objects can disorient us when they are presented in an assemblage that is out of the ordinary; an anchor hanging from a leg projecting from the wall flies in the face of any normal situation or assemblage of things, and gives these objects a queer sensibility, personality or narrative.²⁴ The installations, at times, suggest a backdrop to a performance or can come together to set the stage for a narrative. While my work does not usually seek to create distinct narratives, each piece operates most effectively when it has a stage of its own too: a space in which to live. Many of Robert Gober's sculptural materials are chosen specifically to facilitate illusion,

²⁰ "Roula Partheniou, Artist Website," Roula Partheniou, accessed 25 February, 2018, <http://www.roulapartheniou.com/>.

²¹ "In the Studio with Evan Penny," Vimeo video, 2:42, posted by "Canadian Art," May 8, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/216554650>.

²² "Introduction to Robert Gober: *The Heart Is Not a Metaphor*," digital exhibition tour, MoMA, accessed 30 January, 2018, <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/5/287>.

²³ An anchor is looped around an ankle, which projects from a wall.

²⁴ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 162.

while mine (with the exception of synthetic hair) are chosen for alternate reasons. Silicone, lace and hair have historic connections to impersonation in drag, theatre and film. I continue to use these materials to access and talk about that history of identity performance. Additionally, I favour materials that promote a bodily feeling: the idea that you are witnessing something that speaks to an unfamiliar identity. It's crucial that my work does this because it helps create space for identities that are non-normative to exist. If the work were too illusionistic of a recognizable body, that space would collapse.

Conclusion

The title of my thesis exhibition, *and where is the body?*, is derived from an appropriate source: these are the first words, repeated and spoken as a question, in the song *Body Beautiful* performed by Salt-N-Pepa for the 1995 movie *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*. In my mind the question is two-fold: when a drag queen asks “and where is the body?” to a fellow performer, they are referencing the physical embodiment of their alter persona. Hip pads, a breast plate, a waist trainer or corset. “Where is the body?”, in this sense, refers to transformation of identity. Thought of another way, the question points back to the conundrum of how to speak to the idea of identity without showing a literal body: “how can a body be ‘there’ if distance from a body is simultaneously suggested?²⁵” In this sense, “where is the body?” suggests an alternative way of thinking about identity, one that might be removed from a normalized figure.

To preserve the intimate nature of many of the works I have created, the ArtLab Gallery, which is quite expansive, will be transformed through focused lighting. In addition to moveable walls, the lighting will help create environments for my body-like works to live in. Many of my works use water-white silicone as material, and against white walls they can fade away. To counter this, consideration will be paid to painting specific moveable walls with certain colours in order to help complement each piece, bring them forward from the wall visually, and create a charged space. The resulting exhibition will be one filled with artworks that focus on queer identity and vulnerability,

²⁵ Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 21.

questioning how these are related to the body and hair, how we perform the shifts in identity and how room for non-normative identities can be made.

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Supplemental Reading List

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Chapter 2: Interview with Artist Francisco-Fernando Granados

July 7, 2017, SATELLiTE Project Space, 121 Dundas Street, London, ON.

Introduction

Francisco-Fernando Granados is an artist, writer and curator of Guatemalan descent and is currently based in Toronto. His multidisciplinary practice spans performance, drawing, installation, digital media and community-based projects.

I was introduced to Granados as a performer for an iteration of his work *spatial profiling*²⁶.... After the performance, he sat down with me at SATELLiTE Project Space to discuss themes which echo through both of our practices. Perhaps because of the location of the interview, much of these are discussed through the lens of *spatial profiling*.... Themes include queer identity, power, exposure and vulnerability, the expectations of the audience during performance and self-care. The conversation also touched on ideas of queer intuition, the intertwining of personal and public realms, what does it mean to be queer enough, and the privilege that comes with being identified, or “passing”, as member of a majority. While these notions are not explicitly addressed in my writing, I see them as being present implicitly within my exhibition and creative research as a whole.

Granados has presented work throughout North America and in Europe, notably at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), Vancouver Art Gallery, Darling Foundry (Montreal), Hessel Museum of Art (New York), Kulturhuset (Stockholm) and Theatre Academy at the University of Arts (Helsinki). He has curated exhibitions, performance art programs and screenings in Toronto and Vancouver, and has been involved as a member of 7a*11d International Performance Festival since 2012. His writing has been included in several noteworthy publications, such as FUSE and PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, and he is the recipient of Artist Grants from the Toronto and Ontario Arts Councils, and the Canada Council for the Arts. I thank Francisco-Fernando Granados for providing me with opportunities to do live work with him, and for generously lending his voice and experience to this dossier.

²⁶ “Spatial Profiling...Francisco-Fernando Granados,” Francisco-Fernando Granados, accessed 1 September, 2017, <http://francisco-fernando-granados.blogspot.com/search/label/spatial%20profiling>.

Tyler Durbano: I want to start this interview in the same way you prefaced our studio time yesterday, with you describing your relationship to performance. You outlined the history of *spatial profiling*... and how you started at Langara Art College before heading to Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Francisco-Fernando Granados: When I decided that I wanted to make art, I enrolled in the Langara Fine Arts Program in Vancouver. It is fairly traditional in terms of its media so my primary training, and perhaps my first aesthetic language, is drawing and painting. Then I came to performance, not through academic training, but randomly: I was walking past a magazine shop on the way to meet a boy that I was seeing at the time, and I was struck by an image of a figure with a bloody red splash overlaid on them. It was a *Canadian Art* from 2005 with an image of Rebecca Belmore's *Fountain* on the cover. As it turned out, this was an issue focusing on performance in light of Rebecca's pavilion at the Venice Biennale. I bought the magazine, took it to dinner and afterward I found myself laying underneath a tree with the young man I had met, reading him the article. There was an article written by Randy Gledhill about 7a*11d and about LIVE, which is a festival in Vancouver, where he described all of these performances. The descriptions just thrilled me. One of the artists that he talked about in that essay was Naufús Ramirez-Figueroa, who is a Guatemalan-Canadian artist based in Vancouver. The first live performance I ever saw was Naufús performing at the Vancouver Art Gallery and I was blown away. Eventually I met him and he invited me to be part of a performance art workshop for youth at Gallery Gachet and that's how I started doing performance.

While living in Vancouver I struggled to reconcile the formal training I was getting with the community I was a part of. Vancouver was, in some ways, quite hostile towards performance in general and towards political practices. So I decided to come to Toronto. After that I realized I don't approach an action any differently than how I approach a picture plane. I'm thinking about composition, repetition, harmony and dissonance. I think a lot about triads, even in how *spatial profiling*... is installed, specifically with the relationship of the chairs to the drawing and the video.

There are many histories of performance and one of the liberating things is that it doesn't have a single origin. Performance art coagulated around, as Margaret Dragu puts

it, all of these refugee practices.²⁷ There was a moment when people started making things in time and space, and those practices were later historicized as performance art. I think the moment that we are in now—a post-Marina Abramovic, post-internet moment—where a lot of performance documentation is available has created a certain pop category of performance. There are ideas about the genre that people, who aren't necessarily in the art world, are familiar with and stereotypes have developed.

TD: When I told my colleagues I was participating in a performance, they asked, “Are you going to be naked?” I thought that statement was strange: associating nudity or some sort of scandal to performance. Why do those things seem to stick together?

F-FG: I think what belies that statement is a stereotype of performance art as being inattentive to what many artists do, which is compose something. Much of my early practice held a defensiveness against being perceived through those stereotypes. Some expectations of performance art, which are sometimes important to disregard, are that the artist is facing the audience, that they are identifiable, and that the artist's body and face is presented at the centre of the work. In *spatial profiling*... I turn away from the crowd: finding a way to make an action that did not require me to be presented according to the audiences expectations. To me, an interesting component of performance is that you're watching an artist work. In every other discipline I can think of, the time spent making work is separate from the time presenting the work. What performance does is merge the two, that's all: It's not necessarily about spectacle or shock. Rebecca Belmore is a fantastic example of how this happens because most of her performances are her making something.

TD: In the days prior to performing *spatial profiling*..., I spoke to a friend who is a teacher. I told her I was anxious and asked what she does to relieve the anxiety of being in front of a group of people. She responded by saying, “Even though I'm always me, I consider teaching like being on stage: I have to wear certain clothes, I have a specific function to fulfil, I can't relax in the same way that I would with friends, and I'm in a

²⁷ “La Dragu Artist Statement,” Margaret Dragu, *CRAM International*, accessed August 26, 2017, <http://www.craminternational.ca/artist-statement.html>

completely different environment.” She described the act of portraying a teacher, which helps her get over any nerves she might have. What I understand from this is that there is a certain type of power that you can command in performing. Can you speak to the power of performance, and the negotiation of power in some of your work? For example, when talk about turning your back to the audience, I see that as a powerful move.

F-FG: I think the power of live work is the ability to bring focus.²⁸ A live body, a person doing something, demands a kind of attention that is very different from anything else. That focus is a certain ethical demand: it’s the recognition of you and whoever is seeing you as human beings. That’s the point at which the formal, internal logic of the work breaks through to the political, which is something that I am very interested in.

TD: When you explain it that way, it makes sense why you would gravitate towards live work as opposed to making a painting. It is often about the focus being on the person.

F-FG: That’s one end I reached with 2D work: the thing I needed to address was not easy to visualize. It was not something that I could write about. The first performance that I did was called *Exile*, after Roland Barthes *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, which is basically Roland Barthes the lover, talking to himself and to another lover who, if you read between the lines, is clearly another man. *Exile* was an action where I gave myself hickeys. I was interested, in a sort of painterly way, in bringing blood to the surface of my skin, making a mark. After I would cover it up with white makeup. So many things are at play here: bruising, ideas of shame and sexuality, the troubled relationship I have as a very light skinned Latino man who can pass for white, and the ambiguities that comes with that both as fetish object and as a potentially privileged person. In terms of performance, specifically, I could not paint blood rising to the surface of my skin and then covering it. I had to enact it.

²⁸ “I don’t necessarily talk about what I do as performance, but I always think of it as live work. The term performance carries a certain theatrical expectation. It became really important for me to be seen as an artist, and as an artist who works live. If you want to call that performance art, that’s fine. But at the end of the day it is no different: an artist in an artist, and I am very much against treating performance as special, whether it is to dismiss it or elevate it as some sort of transcendental form.”

TD: In my practice I work with hair, usually by poking it into silicone or knotting it into lace. This slow, methodical process speaks to self-care, because of the time and dedication put into something that you're presenting to the world. In terms of self-care, ultimately it's a reflection of how you want people to view yourself.

F-FG: Well, hair has not always been considered erotically desirable. I came to Canada when I was 16 and there was a time where, because of the male beauty standards, I thought I was unfuckable because I was too hairy and I wasn't muscular. It's interesting that something certainly within queer culture, but perhaps not exclusively, has shifted in terms of the fact that now hair is a fetish object and a dressing. The fact that you're quite skilfully and carefully putting the hair into the silicone speaks to the idea of adornment.

TD: When you say adornment, I automatically have a positive association. I think about where the hair is on the body, the location and how much is there. But hair can be quite disturbing and uncomfortable. If a man has hair on his back, forget about it. No one will even look at him. But if they have a light sprinkling of hair on their chest, the hair and potentially the person become fetishized. It's intriguing and ridiculous.

F-FG: That's a fascinating point because those expectations of what is and isn't attractive have more to do with who is imagined as the object of desire, or subject of desire. If you are the object of desire, you're aware of who you aren't attractive to. That idea that you have to be smooth is an iconographic convention that actually comes from a fairly narrow, gay, white, North American place. There is a documentary about the guy who founded Falcon Studios and how, because he had the time and resources to create and distribute porn, his personal taste—hairless, tall, muscular, white men—was installed as the standard.²⁹ Something that's interesting about this moment in time is how user-generated content and self-portraiture have expanded the scope of what can be eroticized.

TD: In looking through your archive, you make live work and also documents of performance. How do those function differently for you? I was looking specifically at

²⁹ A gay pornography website.

your work *With Glowing Hearts*, and thinking about how it would operate if someone saw you on the street versus if someone only saw the documentation of you spray-painting your chest.³⁰

F-FG: *With Glowing Hearts* is a piece that is very different from everything else I've done. It was a performance I did in Toronto while I was still with Emily Carr. I'll abbreviate the story and tell you that it was an action not intended for a gallery. It is something I just went out onto the street and did with a photographer. The boy I mentioned earlier, the one I was reading under the tree with, died on that corner where the photo was taken. He was run over. Nobody on the street knew it was an artwork but that's a condition with street performance: it cannot really matter if people understand it. It was deeply personal, and yet simultaneously the 2010 Vancouver Olympics had copy written "With Glowing Hearts," the line from the Canadian National Anthem, as their tagline. It was paralleling the deeply personal with the very public. The ambiguity of the decoration acted as a monument for the young man but the aerosol formed a toxic cloud around me; that's a part of both the personal and the political. I haven't made another piece like that. In terms of documentation versus live work, if the performance happens and it did what it needed to do for you personally, and you see the photos and there isn't an artwork in there, then that's fine. For me, the artwork from *With Glowing Hearts* happened when I saw the photograph, and I thought *that is an artwork*.

TD: In writing about *spatial profiling*..., you said it originated from an artistic "exercise and then it opened up ways to explore spatial politics and tropes of identity-based art."³¹ Can you quickly expand on what you mean by the tropes of identity-based art?

F-FG: It's this idea that the artist must be identifiable, or that if an artist's body appears in the work that it's primarily about identity. *spatial profiling*... doesn't deny that identity is an important dimension of a work. However, as the piece has developed, I try to

³⁰ A performance intervention on the corner of College and Ossington, Toronto. Gold paint sprayed onto the chest over the heart. "With Glowing Hearts," Francisco-Fernando Granados, accessed August 27, 2017, <http://francisco-fernando-granados.blogspot.ca/search/label/with%20glowing%20hearts>.

³¹ "Spatial Profiling," Francisco-Fernando Granados, accessed August 27, 2017, <http://francisco-fernando-granados.blogspot.ca/search/label/spatial%20profiling>.

challenge the convention and expectation that the artist must face the public. My body didn't need to be at the centre of the iteration we did. That could be seen as lazy or as outsourced, but to me it comes from the fact that I'm mortal. Removing myself injects hope that the piece might have a longevity that doesn't have to do with my lifespan. Like I mentioned before, it has to do with the fact that the work itself is the performance, not a photo of the performance or a video.

TD: Yesterday you said you hope the action will continue, but you're not sure for how long or how it will change, and so on. How has it transformed from the first iteration to now, and how can you see it changing in the future? Because as the political climate changes it could speak to those changes.

F-FG: Absolutely. When I first did this work I was going from being a refugee to being a Canadian citizen so it made sense for me to be in it. I understand my body as being privileged in its ambiguity: if you look at me you wouldn't necessarily know where I came from. In this show, because it was dealing with surveillance and how bodies are abstracted, I wanted to experiment with doing half of the performance obscene—outside the scene—and half of it on scene. In the version that Christian Camacho-Light curated at Bard last year, it was about the trace and the traces left by state violence, so it was better done all obscene.³² So, two kinds of contexts: broader political and curatorial contexts. The reason why this work continues on is not because it's my greatest hit and I have to sing it at every gig. It's because I have been in conversation with the people who are bringing the work in, in order to have it make sense.

TD: At the beginning of 2017 in an interview by Fabien Maltais-Bayda for *Momus*, titled "Performance Art in a Precarious Time"³³, you touch on the idea of exposure in performance art. The article also spoke about University of Toronto queer theorist John Paul Ricco and the artist Mikiki. While reading through and looking at photos of Mikiki's work that accompanied the interview, I couldn't help but feel like I would have turned

³² "Standard Forms," Christian Camacho-Light, Bard College, accessed August 27, 2017, <http://www.bard.edu/ccs/standard-forms/>.

³³ Fabien Maltais-Bayda, "Performance Art in a Precarious Time: A Conversation with Johanna Householder and Francisco-Fernando Granados," *Momus*, January 12, 2017, <http://momus.ca/performance-art-precarius-time-conversation-johanna-householder-francisco-fernando-granados/>.

away if I was present at the performance, like one other audience member did. With reference to that, could you talk about what is exposed, or if there is always something exposed, in your live works? In *spatial profiling...*, how central is exposing yourself in some way, perhaps not physically, or exposing the audience to your work?

F-FG: For John, it has to do with queerness as a way of life. It is the way, broadly speaking, men who have sex with men are in a relationship to HIV and its history, regardless of how we bind ourselves, or unbind ourselves, when being in contact with each other. There is a resonance between bodies that encounter one another and performance art in general because that encounter requires our exposure. Even if you're not facing the audience, it requires exposure. The audience is also exposed: in very practical terms (how they might appear in documentation) and because they can feel you in the space. In one version of *spatial profiling...* which happened in Regina as part of Performatorium, I was doing the work for an extended period in long johns and a thermic shirt. In the interest not straining my shoulder, I rested my inactive hand in the loop of my pants, which eventually pulled on my long johns and exposed my ass.³⁴ That's an interesting instance where a certain kind of exposure emerged within the work. In an instant I made the decision not to adjust my pants; perhaps because of the queer context it made sense to allow that to happen. I like the compositional justice of denying the face but exposing your ass, which actually ties back to John's work. There's a beautiful essay that John has written called "Name No One Man," which is on Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased De Kooning Drawing*. In that work, the allegory that he uses to imagine the relationship between Rauschenberg and De Kooning is not one of being face to face, but one of being front to back. And so there's some of that: an ethics that exists when, in this case, two men are not face to face. The question arises: what kind of ethic is present when there is no face to face meeting? Even within a queer lived experience, there is a different charge to not facing, or not being faced.

TD: I was also reading up on an essay you wrote called "The Extended Scene: Seeing Queer Futurity through the work of Colin Campbell", in which you brought up Judith

³⁴ Often during *spatial profiling...* performers are encouraged to rest their inactive hand in their back pocket or belt loop to save from straining their shoulder during the drawing portion of the work.

Butler. Paraphrasing her notion of queer as a verb rather than a noun, you said “queer (as a quality or action) may be visualized in terms of the kinetic, as a series of motions that are, in the present, in simultaneous engagement with both the past and the future.”³⁵ I’m wondering if this engages with your performances?

F-FG: I’ve experienced a shift in my understanding of queerness, expanding that definition to include identity and certain kinds of identity-based activism that needs to happen. For example, Project Marie: a police raid operation that took place in Etobicoke, where the police started patrolling, targeting and ticketing guys who were cruising in the park.³⁶ With activists and artists, like Mikiki, there’s been a concerted effort to speak out against the targeting of queer men and men who have sex with men. Within that context, to simply assert a same sex desire is not necessarily queer. I agree: queerness is also a verb in a sense of how you can do something in a particular way that allows you to denaturalize it. It’s perhaps also found in the non-productive pleasure of a certain activity. So Butler is essential in terms of thinking of queerness as a site-specific practice. That’s where this idea of always shifting certain details happens in terms of context. There’s a queer intuition to that.

TD: Also in that essay you mention that the dialogue around HIV in North America has shifted from crisis to management, and queer bodies find themselves policed in new ways. How are queer bodies being policed in new ways?

F-FG: From crisis to management refers to PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) and the relationship to HIV that all men who have sex with men have, and how it has shifted since PrEP. The expectations that have existed—that either you had to wear a condom, or that not wearing a condom was reckless—have shifted in ways that are harder to account for. Now people are negotiating their relationship to intimacy differently. The other thing this alludes to is the criminalization of people with HIV in Canada, and this I mostly know about through the work of people like Mikiki, Alex McClelland, or AIDS Action

³⁵ Francisco-Fernando Granados, “The Extended Scene: Seeing Queer Futurity through the Work of Colin Campbell,” *Drain*, 2016. <http://drainmag.com/the-extended-scene-seeing-queer-futurity-through-the-work-of-colin-campbell/>.

³⁶ John Reiti, “Toronto Police Should Drop Project Marie Charges, City and Provincial Politicians Say,” CBC News, November 8, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/project-marie-reaction-1.3858328>.

Now in Toronto. Even though there may not be sodomy laws in the way there would have been fifty years ago, queer sexualized bodies are managed and punished through things like policing park cruising or HIV laws that make nondisclosure a crime. This is new. In a way it's gone from complete neglect during the Reagan years to an over management of who can have sex with who how, and who has to say what to who. My point regarding this is, these are intimate negotiations.

TD: When I wrote that question, I presumed that you would be thinking about PrEP. Given the history of police and the queer community, when we mention the word “policing” you can be redirected to think about external forces imposing upon a group of people. Yet, this policing (of PrEP) comes from inside the LGBTQ+ community.

F-FG: Yes, it can also mean policing within certain social circles: the imposition of PrEP as the expected mode to use, or the disparagement of condoms.

TD: And discriminating, if that isn't too harsh of a word, against those who cannot afford or choose not to take PrEP.³⁷

F-FG: Power works in these ways that are much more complex and nuanced than certainly the law can capture.

TD: I was thinking about other queer artists who are based in Toronto. I was fortunate enough to be at the MacLaren Art Centre before I came to Western, during which time Hazel Meyer had an exhibition of work there. In an interview we did with her she said that, “this idea of taking up space as a woman, as a queer woman, as a woman with a sick body (referring to Crohn’s Disease)... these are all things that get implanted in you to make you disappear and not take up space. In 2001 in a piece called *Unnecessary Roughness*, I came to installation and talking about the space of the gallery. Every inch of the wall was a part of the work and a big part of that was to fight against this societal force that tells you if you’re A, B, C, or D you should not take up space, you should

³⁷ At the time of this interview, PrEP was still an expensive option for those without accommodating health coverage. Now, generic versions of Truvada exist that are slightly more cost effective.

disappear."³⁸ Does the notion occupying space as a powerful act factors into your work as a queer artist?

F-FG: The first time I heard Rebecca Belmore speak, she referred to her work in that sense. She said, what I do when I make a performance is I'm occupying space. I think that is so important: you have to be attentive to the politics of space. However, in terms of what Hazel is saying, is it the most important thing for me—an able bodied male, sometimes white passing—to be taking up the most amount of space? And certainly my answer for this version of *spatial profiling*... is perhaps not. Perhaps it's a type of queer intuition to know when to withdraw so other bodies can take up space. This version of *spatial profiling*... was an experiment and study on how to withdraw, allowing other bodies to step in.

TD: I like that you used the term study because of its connection to drawing. In looking at your work, thinking about the study and circling back to the beginning of this interview, I'm interested in the intersection between drawing and your live practice. That's where I'm coming from too: starting with a formalized training in drawing and painting. But I'm wondering, how did you transition from one to the other, and how do the practices remain connected? I'm thinking of the piece you did with the York University Student Union where you asked participants to reimagine the pride flag and rearrange the colours.

F-FG: It is a complicity, not in the sense of underhanded dealings but to be folded together with someone or something else. I understand the relationship between the performance and the drawing as queer complicity, because it's not a straightforward relationship of action painting. *True Colours* was the first time that I consciously embraced what I learned at school in conjunction with live work. Suzanne Carte, the Curator of Student Engagement, invited me to do a project with the York University Student Union. To summarize, they were interested in identity and being political. At the same time there was a certain kind of desire in the student leaders to really have control over who could and couldn't participate in the making. Who is queer and who isn't queer?

³⁸ "Hazel Meyer: Muscle Panic," Vimeo video, 6:50, posted by "MacLaren Art Centre," July 29, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/134868393>.

While I can understand and support the necessity for queer spaces, I think that the thing about queerness is that it's not always about who can be identified as queer. If we start there, where does it stop and who determines who is queer enough to participate in this activity? What I did in that piece is drew from my understanding of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, where he talks about the notion that colour is content and not form. I also drew inspiration from Guido Molinari's technique of painting one strip, covering it up and then painting another. We grounded the work in those ideas, agreeing to take the pride flag and randomize it by changing its colours. There was something pleasurable in folding together Kant and Molinari, and using the tactic of randomization to destabilize the assumptions of identity that the students were making, in terms of who appears queer enough to participate.

TD: The idea of who determines what queer is or who appears queer enough has reemerged in controversy with the addition of two colours to the pride flag.

F-FG: The brown and the black stripes, yes.

TD: In that light, this project is quite political. I wonder how it would be received if it was done again, now.

F-FG: And what to do with those two stripes – they're an unquestionable good, but there is a shocking amount of resistance. The other thing about that project is that it was an elaborate ruse for me to make paintings, which ended up becoming part of a pride float. That project brought me back to painting in a way that has been crucial for helping me to reimagine something like *spatial profiling*.... It showed me that there is a way to mix the formal with the political.

TD: I think that's a natural stopping place but I want to thank you for your time and generosity, and for including me in your performance.

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Chapter 3: Creative Research Documentation



Untitled (Man-Cave 1). 2016. Oil, acrylic, charcoal and chalk on unstretched canvas. Approximately 8' x 4'.

This painting draws inspiration from interviews with London, Ontario, men about their man-caves. The organization of the spaces I encountered and the stories that accompanied many of the pieces relayed the notion of a strong relationship between space and occupant. Here that relationship is explored. Photos of different spaces are altered and painted together on one canvas as a juxtaposition, questioning the curation of the space and ideas of masculinity that arise from the interrelation of occupant and object.



Untitled (Man-Cave 2). 2017. Acrylic on unstretched canvas, wood, aluminum, wrestling figurines, horse tack, vintage tea set, found books and magazines, shelving, coat rack, hardware. Painted backdrop measures approximately 8' x 15'.

Through an assemblage of made and found materials, the scene of a made up man-cave is set. Genuine objects, like the horse tack, magazines and teacups, are paired with handmade decoy objects, like the flimsy stool, pegboard of tools and license plate. When seen from a distance the combination of real and fake items are reminiscent of a semi-persuasive heteronormative male space, but closer inspection shows some objects to be decoys which fail to uphold the tropes of stereotypical masculinity.

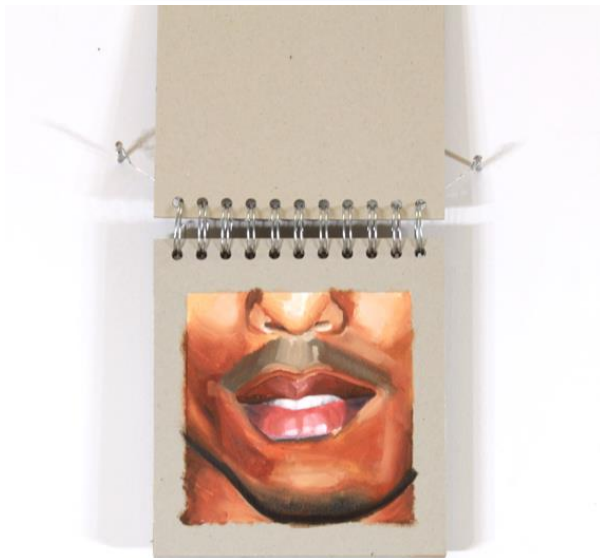


Details of *Untitled (Man-Cave 2)*. Clockwise, from top left:

Stool. 2017. Aluminum, acrylic paint and Masonite. Approximately 32" x 12" x 12".

Tools. 2017. Aluminum, acrylic paint, pegboard and hardware. Pegboard is approximately 25" x 26".

Tea Set. 2017. Found china tea set, Plasti Dip, shelf. Shelf is approximately 23" x 10" x 10".



Selections from *Untitled (Moustache Book)*. 2017. Oil paint on cardboard.
Approximately 6" x 5.5"

This work marks the beginning of my exploration of hair as related to conveyance and performance of identity.



Braid. 2017. Donated human hair, synthetic hair, nylon garment lace. Lace is approximately 25" x 16"

The technique of ventilating hair (knotting hair into a lace backing) is often used to make wigs and prosthetics for drag, theatre and those with hair loss. Typically a fine lace is used, which can be dyed to match the wearers complexion, minimizing its visibility against the skin. For *Braid* and other ventilated hair sculptures, I use thick-weave and patterned garment lace, which refuses to disappear against the skin. I see this refusal as a queer gesture. These objects promote the idea of hair as prop: things which can be put on or taken off to perform identity.

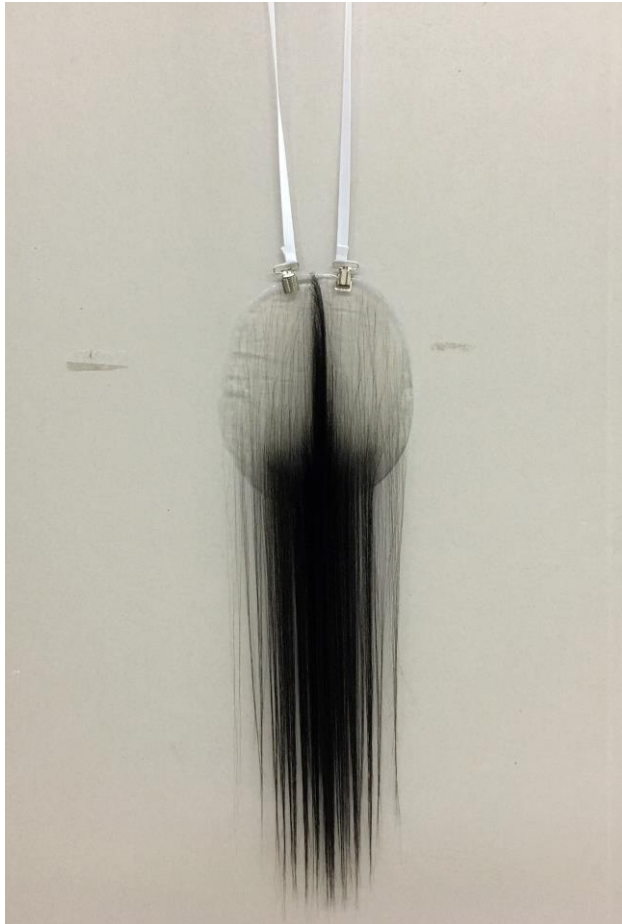


Moustache. 2017. Synthetic hair, nylon garment lace. Lace is approximately 4" x 7"



Chest Plate 2. 2017. Silicone and human hair. Approximately 11.5" x 8"

Labour is an important part of my work, as it highlights the relationship between identity and maintenance or care for the body. This piece, like all of my silicone and hair works, was made by poking small amounts of hair, often one or two at a time, into the rubber surface using a needle. Working this way carefully defines the density, shape and pattern of hair, which relates a manicured or unruly appearance in the object. The labour of making the sculpture speaks to the work that goes into managing signifiers that others can read our identity through.



Groin Plate. 2017. Silicone, synthetic hair, suspenders. Silicone plate and hair measure approximately 28" x 8".

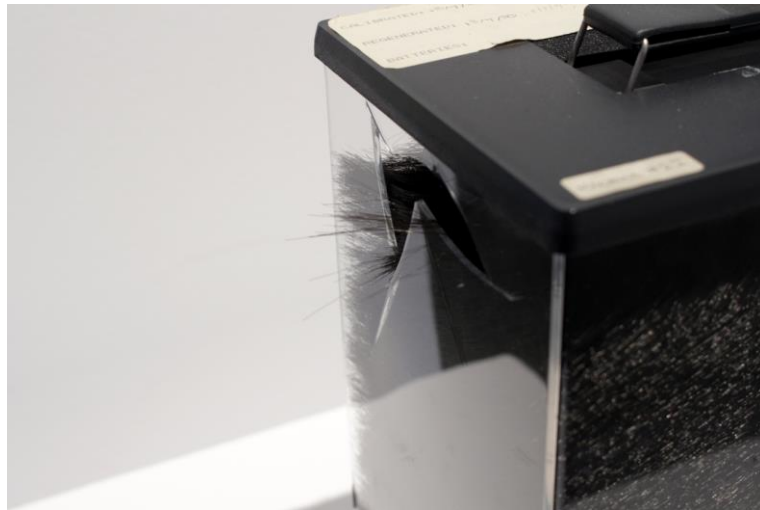


Chest Plate 1. 2017. Silicone, human hair, plastic straps, grommets. Approximately 8" x 13"



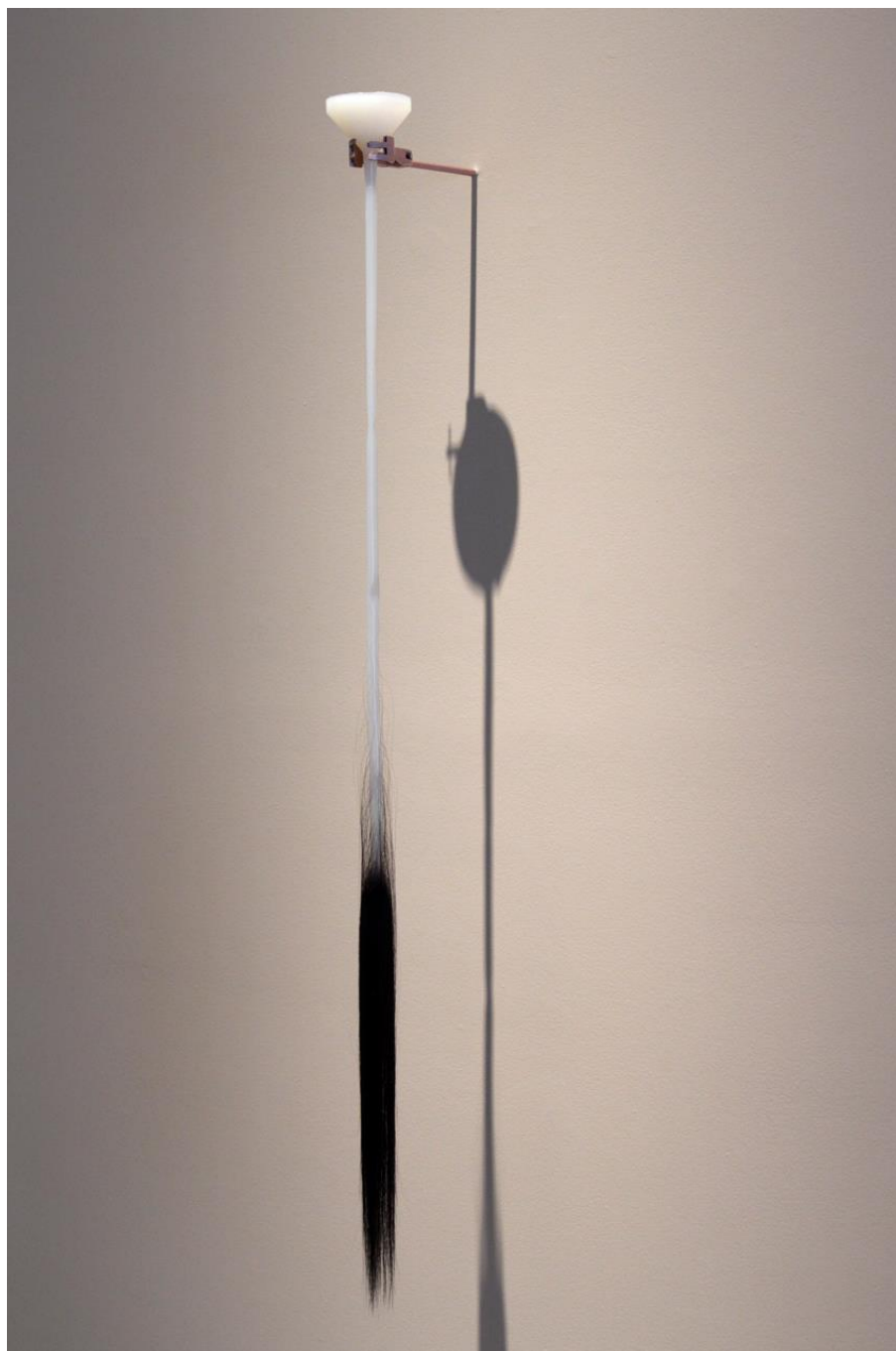
Pelt. 2017. Silicone, synthetic hair, wooden supports. Silicone measures approximately 20" x 56"

The skin-like appearance of *Pelt* and its method of display add to the abject quality and complex relationships most people have with hair. It can induce disparate responses depending on its location on (or off) the body and the situation in which it presents itself. The wooden supports speak to that, holding the sculpture like a prized hunting trophy, but its slumped posture recalls something discarded, like a used waxing strip.



Reading the Room. 2017. Repurposed hygrothermograph, silicone, synthetic hair.
Approximately 16" x 16" x 5"

Replacing the graph paper in the hygrothermograph, which usually records the temperature and humidity in a gallery, with hair removes its original function and makes room for a metaphorical one. I consider the sculpture to be a manifestation of internal anxiety, which urges some to check and recheck their posture, pitch of voice, consider who is watching and how they are being perceived. It is a reminder that signifiers of identity are being perceived by others, and not always as intended. In this way, *Reading the Room* introduces ideas of vulnerability and exposure to my creative research.



Untitled (Tail 1). 2017. Silicone, synthetic hair, hardware. Silicone and hair measure approximately 54.5" x 4"



Untitled (Tail 2). 2017. Silicone, synthetic hair, hardware. Silicone and hair measure approximately 54.5" x 4"



Untitled (Plug). 2018. Documentation of live performance using silicone and synthetic hair sculpture. Sculpture measures approximately 40". Video documentation by Matthew Trueman.

During this performance, *Plug* is inserted into my mouth and a monologue is recited from memory. The nature of the sculpture inhibits my speech and may cause gagging, drooling and stress. During *and where is the body?*, this piece will be displayed as an audio version of the monologue accompanied by the static sculpture.



Selected video stills from *Pull and Poke*. 2018. Video.

Pull and Poke references popular online pimple popping and eyebrow manicuring videos, which highlight our fixation on bodily appearance. In this video, I use a microscope to explore and manicure my silicone sculptures. The tweezing of handmade follicles, application of creams, injecting of hair and picking debris draws viewers in and causes an attraction/repulsion response. The pieces being groomed are not living bodies, and yet often evoke a bodily feeling. This work also addresses the idea of talking about a body or identity when a body is not present.



Hackles. 2017. Documentation of performance for the camera. 7 minutes 45 seconds. Video and photo documentation by Graham Prevost.

Hackles is a performance using a handmade hair necklace. During the summer of 2017, synthetic hair was painstakingly knotted through the links of necklace chain (approximately ten feet long). The performance consists of me attempting to brush the wavy hair and maintain the necklace. However, when this reveals itself to be futile, the aim of the performance changes to simply shedding the necklace. Both the making and

the shedding of the necklace speak to ideas of labour and complexities which accompany maintaining an identity.

Curriculum Vitae

Gary Tyler Durbano

Education

2016-2018 MFA, Western University (in progress)
 2009-2012 BFA, NSCAD University
 2005-2009 BA, Acadia University

Exhibitions

(*solo or two-person)

2018 *and where is the body?* ArtLab Gallery, London, ON*
Performance Night. SATELLiTE Project Space, London, ON
Between Us and You. TAP Arts, London, ON
 (Curated by Sandra DeSalvo & Angie Quick)

2017 *Common Goods*. Forest City Gallery, London, ON
the last to go will see the first three go before. SATELLiTE Project Space, London, ON
Sleight of Hands. ArtLab Gallery, London, ON
You Can't Steal A Gift. SATELLiTE Project Space, London, ON

2016 *Keepers*. Forest City Gallery, London, ON
Off the Hook: Art Auction. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON

2015 *Best in Snow*. Campus Gallery, Georgian College, Barrie, ON
Man Cave. Art in House, Barrie, ON*
Off the Hook: Art Auction. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON
Community Art Showcase. Community Wholeness Centre, Barrie, ON*
Life Stories. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON
Drift. First Floor Gallery, Barrie, ON*
Benefactor Exhibition. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON

2014 *Getting to Zero*. The Front Room Gallery, Barrie, ON
Gift Sized Art Exhibition and Sale. Artworld Fine Art, Toronto, ON
Off the Hook: Art Auction. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON
Schooled: The ART of Teaching Art. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON
New Love. Gallery 111, Barrie, ON

2013 *Off the Hook: Art Auction*. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON.
 NSCAD Residency Closing Exhibition. Studio Gallery, New Glasgow, NS
 NSCAD University Graduate Exhibition. Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, NS
 Inaugural Exhibition. Margaret George Gallery, New Glasgow, NS
A Little Class Goes a Long Way. Eyelevel Gallery, Halifax, NS

2012 *Off-shoots*: New Glasgow Residency Opener. Studio Gallery, New Glasgow, NS
PRIME: NSCAD University Paint/Drawing Dept. Exhibition. Seeds Gallery, Halifax, NS

2011 NSCAD University Paint/Drawing Dept Show. Seeds Gallery, Halifax, NS

Awards & Residencies

2017	Travel Grant, Western University
2016-18	Western Graduate Research Scholarship
2012-13	NSCAD University/New Glasgow Community Studio Residency Program
2012	BMO 1st! Fine Art Award Nominee, Atlantic Canada

Art Festivals & Conferences

2018	Graduate Visual Arts Open Studios & Conference: "Inward Outward," Western University. London, ON
2017	Graduate Visual Arts Open Studios & Conference: "Community," Western University. London, ON
2014	<i>Who New?!</i> Barrie's Downtown Community Art Crawl, The Front Room Gallery. Barrie, ON
2013	Art at Night, New Glasgow, NS

Selected Experience

2018	Performer in Francisco-Fernando Granados' <i>spatial profiling... (extended)</i> , part of <i>Longevity or a Lack Thereof</i> . MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON. (Curator: Renée van der Avoird)
2017-18	Graduate Teaching Assistant, <i>VAS1025 Portfolio Foundations of Visual Art</i> (Professor: Anna Madelska). Western University. London, ON Secretary, Visual Arts Graduate Student Association (VAGSA), Western University. London, ON Marketing & Communications Assistant, Office of the Dean - Arts & Humanities, Western University. London, ON
2017	Preparator, McMichael Canadian Art Collection. Kleinburg, ON (Summer YCW) Organizing Committee Member, Graduate Visual Arts Open Studios & Conference: "Community". Western University. London, ON Performer in Francisco-Fernando Granados' <i>spatial profiling...</i> , part of <i>Surveillance Signal</i> . SATELLiTE Project Space, London, ON. (Curator: Mitra Shreeram) Actor (Detective 1) in Rah Eleh's <i>Ethnic Roots</i>
2016-17	Graduate Teaching Assistant, <i>VAS1020 Foundation of Visual Art</i> (Professor: Tricia Johnson). Western University. London, ON Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Rep., PSAC Local 610, Western University. London, ON
2016	Guest Critic, <i>Painting Ignition</i> (Instructor: Scott Sawtell). Georgian College. Barrie, ON
2015	Barrie Arts Council Committee Member. Barrie, ON
2014-15	Visual Arts Instructor, MacLaren Art Centre. Barrie, ON
2014-16	Corporate and Community Relations Associate, MacLaren Art Centre. Barrie, ON
2013-14	Barrie Arts and Culture Council Committee Member. Barrie, ON
2013	Guest Speaker, Pictou Regional Library. New Glasgow, NS

2010	Guest Speaker, Northumberland Regional High School. New Glasgow, NS
	Instructor, NSCAD University Extended Studies. Halifax, NS
2008-09	Instructor, Acadia University Art Gallery. Wolfville, NS

Publications

2017	Borland, Nicki. "Roll Call: What Does Community Mean to You?" London Fuse. London, ON
	Borland, Nicki. "Meet the Artists: Western's Open Studios 2017" London Fuse. London, ON
2013	Harvie, Debbi. "...And That's a Wrap: Artist in Residence Preparing..." The Advocate. Pictou, NS
	Coleman, Shawna. "Tyler Durbano Reflects on his Time in New Glasgow," The News. New Glasgow, NS
	NSCAD University Graduate Catalogue
2012	Dickson, Kim. "NSCAD-New Glasgow Artists in Residence... on October 25," New Glasgow, NS
	Mackenzie, Amy. "Drawing in an Audience," The News. New Glasgow, NS
2011	The Sandpiper Quarterly: Sierra Club Atlantic Canada Chapter - Online newsletter, Summer Issue
	The Sandpiper Quarterly: Sierra Club Atlantic Canada Chapter – Online newsletter, Spring Issue
2007	ESTUARY: Acadia University's Creative Arts Magazine
2006	ESTUARY: Acadia University's Creative Arts Magazine